


Title:	Media Relations			
Section:	800 Training, Education & Public Information			
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Effective Date:	January 1, 2024	Revision Date:		
Authorized By:	Fox River Fire District Chiefs			

A. PURPOSE

To describe the media relations policy of the Fox River Fire District.

B. SCOPE

This guideline applies to all fire department operations, emergency and routine.

C. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- 1) There are no special terms or definitions in this guideline.

D. GUIDELINE

- 1) Goal.

The Fox River Fire District seeks to inform its customers by engaging in a pro-active communications program. This program recognizes that one of the most effective and quickest ways to communicate department policies and activities to citizens is by working in partnership with the news media.

- 2) Policy.

- a) Inquiries from the news media are given a high priority by the Fox River Fire District should be responded to as quickly and efficiently as possible. Every effort should be made to meet media deadlines and to ensure that all information released is accurate.

- b) The fire department administration is responsible for the department's media relations, with the exception of most incident-related issues. All fire department employees should notify the duty chief of media inquiries. The majority of fire department media requests are initiated when the media contacts the administrative office general phone number. Because the media often works on tight deadlines, it is important that all divisions respond as soon as possible when the administrative office requests information or a spokesperson for the media. Specific guidelines for responding to media requests follow administrative office requests information or a spokesperson for the media. Specific guidelines for responding to media requests follow.

3) Fire department spokespersons. Unless otherwise authorized, the fire department's spokespersons are:

- a) Chief Officer
- b) An incident-assigned Public Information Officer.

Note: It is the Fox River Fire Districts policy that we do not comment on another jurisdictions Incident.

4) Media Inquiries.

Any media inquiries received by fire department personnel should be referred immediately to the duty chief. An appropriate response to the media would be, "I'm sorry I don't have the full information regarding that issue. I will give your request to the duty chief (or the Public Information Officer) who will respond to you as soon as he/she is available. "Please obtain the reporter's name, phone number (cellphone number also if "in the field"), topic of story and deadline.

5) Sensitive or Controversial Issues.

All television, radio, newspaper, or other media inquiries regarding sensitive or controversial issues should always be immediately referred to the duty chief. Staff will contact the Fire Chief and coordinate a response, including designating a spokesperson after consultation with the Fire Chief.

6) Litigation, Personnel, and Emergency Medical Service Issues.

a) Generally, the business conducted by Fox River Fire District is public, and therefore, is public information. Inquiries regarding pending litigation, matters involving a significant exposure to litigation and certain personnel-related information are exceptions.

b) Inquiries regarding pending litigation or exposure to litigation should be referred to the Agency's Attorney's office. Inquiries regarding personnel-related information should be referred to the Human Resources Department.

7) Personal Points of View.

It is recognized that all employees have the right to their personal points of view regarding any issue. However, personal points of view may conflict with the City's official policy. Therefore, fire department employees who write letters to the editor of any newspaper may not use official department stationary. If an employee chooses to identify himself or herself as a department employee in any personal letter or email to the editor, he or she must include language which states the views set forth in the letter do not represent the views of the department or Fox River Fire District, but rather, are the employee's personally held opinions. Similar disclaimers must be given if an employee addresses a public meeting, participates in a radio talk show, or

is interviewed for a radio or television program unless the employee is officially representing the department or Fox River Fire District employees who are representing the department or Fox River Fire District in any of the above formats must identify themselves as an official spokesperson for the department or Fox River Fire District.

8) General or Routine Issues.

a) Broadcast media: Calls from broadcast media (TV and radio) should always be referred immediately to the duty chief.

b) Local print media: Calls from local print media regarding most departmental issues and programs may be handled by the duty chief. On occasion the Fire Chief may designate an employee to respond to specific questions from print media.

9) Fire Department-Initiated Information.

a) Most proactive media contact is initiated through the Fire Prevention Division. This includes issuing press releases and media advisories, and personal contacts with reporters and editors for coverage. Divisions seeking publicity for events or activities should complete a "Department Media Release" and submit to the Fire Chief's office as soon as possible to ensure the best media coverage of their activities.

b) The Fire Chief's office should be notified before initiating news media contacts.

10) Public Safety Issues.

Because the fire department operates 24/7 and our work generates a high volume of media calls, the department has designated personnel as media spokespersons and follows specific guidelines when releasing information. Any media calls to other department staff regarding a fire department issue should be referred immediately to the duty chief. When appropriate, the Fire Chief shall be contacted at the time of major incidents.

11) Crisis or Emergency Issues.

During a crisis or major emergency, the procedure for handling the media is highlighted in the Emergency Operations Plan. The plan designates the Public Information Officer as the main point of contact for the media. The Public Information Officer is assisted by alternates, including the Police and Fire Department's Public Information Officers, who prepare and disseminate emergency public information.

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